



MONTANA FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

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Meeting Date: June 8, 2023

Agenda Item: 2023 Elk Hunting Access Agreements

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 15 minutes

Background: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks' elk hunting access (EHA) agreements provide landowners with an opportunity to obtain an elk license, permit, or combination thereof in exchange for allowing free public hunting access to a minimum of three public hunters - one of which may be selected by the landowner. Permits and licenses issued are valid only on the landowner's property.

Applications were accepted from March 1 to May 15 this year. For complete applications where the property is in a general license area, FWP will draft an EHA agreement for presentation to the commission in June. For those agreements the commission approves, the two statutorily required public hunter slots will be offered in a random-draw opportunity with public sign-up taking place from June 15 to July 15.

For complete applications where the property is in a limited license/permit area, the department will cap additional licenses/permits for EHA cooperators to 10 percent of the commission-approved license or permit quota adopted for the area during the biennial season-setting process unless district-specific conditions warrant fewer additional licenses/permits be available. If the number of commission-approved EHA applicants exceeds the cap, the department will conduct a random draw to determine successful applicants. If the number of available license/permits allows, every applicant in the random draw would receive one license/permit before FWP issues a second or subsequent license/permit to any landowner (or their family member/employee designee). In areas with limited licenses/permits, the two statutorily required public hunters will be randomly selected from the list of permit or license holders already drawn in that area.

A harvest and satisfaction report for the 2022 agreements is provided as context for commission consideration of 2023 applications and agreements. All proposed 2023 applications and agreements will be reviewed by regional wildlife and access staff. Copies of the proposed applications and agreements will be posted online for review no later than May 25.

Public Involvement Process & Results: Public comment on the proposed 2023 agreements will be taken at the June 8 commission meeting.

Analysis & Alternatives:

Alternative A: Approve some or all of the proposed EHA agreements for 2023 to allow for increased public access to elk for wildlife management purposes.

Alternative B: Do not approve the proposed EHA agreements for 2023. Less public access to elk for wildlife management purposes would result.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: The department requests the 2023 EHA agreements be approved as presented and applicants in districts exceeding the 10 percent cap be sent to a random draw for determination. FWP believes the EHA program has increased public access to elk for wildlife management purposes. No significant adverse impacts to the elk resource are anticipated with the proposed agreements based upon elk population status and management objectives.



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Proposed Motion: I move the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the 2023 elk hunting access agreements as presented by the department and send to a random draw those applications in districts where the number of requests for permits/licenses exceeds the department-imposed cap of 10 percent of the commission-adopted quota previously approved during the biennial season setting process.